

## 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT YR A.

Last Wednesday, many of us came to be marked with ashes, a reminder to us to turn away from sin. This tradition recalls the dramatic way that the early Christians repented their sins, by covering themselves with ashes and wearing sack cloth.

So began Lent, and for the early Christians it was a time of strict fasting and abstinence from certain foods during the whole 40 days of Lent.

Today, we face Lent with a desire to put this time to our best advantage, yes we are encouraged to fast by reducing our food intake and forgoing some pleasure. Many of us, for instance abstain from meat on Fridays.

Fasting can create a new energy within us, sharpen our minds and open us up to prayerful reflection.

Through this time of prayer and reflection, we examine our lives to see what is pulling us away from Jesus and remove them from our lives.

Through prayer and self sacrifice we open our hearts to the flooding love of Jesus to come in and help us resist temptation.

Today's readings remind us that temptation is ever present in our lives.

Just as Jesus faced temptation from the evil one at a vulnerable time in his life, so will we also be tempted to fall away from Jesus.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> reading the devil tempted Adam and Eve in a very sly way by convincing them that if they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree their eyes would be opened and they would be like God. Their sin was therefore a very serious offence, one that had severe consequences for them and for all mankind.

Paul reminds us that the sin of Adam and Eve brought death into the world and of the consequences of our own transgressions. He goes on, however, to reassure us that our relationship with God was put right through Jesus and by what Paul calls Justification, an unearned grace from God.

If you want any proof that the evil one is constantly prowling around, today's gospel gives it.

If the devil can have the audacity to tempt the Son of God he won't think twice about tempting anyone else.

Even the greatest Saints all talk of the temptations in their lives.

Today we heard of the three temptations that Jesus faced.

The first temptation could not have been better timed. Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. He was entitled to eat. God provided manna for the Jews to eat in the desert, why not his Son. Use your power the devil tempts, turn these stones into bread use your miraculous powers to provide for yourself. Jesus resisted, he knew that his powers were for the good of others, not himself.

The second temptation. The devil knew that, for the time being Jesus was under divine protection. Therefore he had the right to expect safety and protection. Jesus is being

pressured to either identify himself as God's son or discredit his entire mission. Additionally he could have used such an event to attract followers. Jesus resisted knowing that this was not the way.

The third temptation was perhaps the most cunning; The devil is suggesting that Jesus change God's plan. By entering the world of political power, Jesus could establish God's kingdom on earth, without having to suffer humiliation and death.

Again Jesus rejects Satans temptation.

So in this time of Lent, we are called upon to confront temptations as Jesus did and resist the power of the evil one.

We are tempted most by the materialism that surrounds us. We live in a world of sinful pleasures, attachment to wealth, our possessions and the positions of power and glory. We are tempted to use any means at our disposal to attain them.

Jesus serves as a model for us, if we follow his example, especially in this special time of Lent, we can conquer

temptations by strengthening ourselves through prayer, penance, the word and through the Eucharist. And also by participating in the many Lenten activities we have made available.

With Jesus in our hearts we are ready to confront any temptation.

In John's gospel 1 we hear

“Greater is the one who is in us, than the one who is in the world”

Greater is the spirit of God within us than the spirit of evil who is in the world.